The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A ~~method for working on a spine, said~~ method, comprising:

providing an apparatus having a distal portion and an expandable bladder coupled to the distal portion, the expandable bladder having surfaces configured to engage and spread apart adjacent vertebrae ~~apart~~ of a spine;

positioning a cannula to access the spine;

~~positioning~~ introducing the apparatus through the cannula such that at least a portion of the expandable bladder is positioned between the adjacent vertebrae; and

inflating the expandable bladder to spread the adjacent vertebrae apart.

Claim 2 (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising operating between the adjacent vertebrae.

Claim 3 (Currently amended): The method of claim 2, ~~further comprising~~ the operating ~~between the adjacent vertebrae~~ is performed while said expandable bladder is inflated.

Claim 4 (Currently amended): The method of claim 2, wherein the operating ~~between the vertebrae comprises~~ includes removing tissue from between the vertebrae.

Claim 5 (Currently amended): The method of claim 4, wherein the tissue removed ~~comprises~~ includes the intervertebral disc.

Claim 6 (Canceled).

Claim 7 (Withdrawn): The method of claim 6, wherein the bladder of the retractor comprises repositionable rigid surfaces.

Claim 8 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the expandable bladder, when inflated, has a shape selected from the group consisting of curved and wedge-shaped.

Claim 9 (Withdrawn): The method of claim 6, wherein the bladder, when inflated, extends around a longitudinal axis of the retractor.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the expandable bladder is spread and arranged for spreading apart the adjacent vertebrae.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): The method of claim 10, wherein the expandable bladder is sized and arranged for enabling removal of intervertebral tissue from between adjacent vertebrae.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): The method of claim 7, wherein the bladder is formed as an accordion or as a wedge-shaped member.

Claim 13 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the expandable bladder is inflated at a pressure from 10 mmHg to 1000 mmHg.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): The method of claim 1, further comprising positioning a cannula between the adjacent vertebrae, wherein positioning of the retractor comprises introducing the retractor through a passage of the cannula.

Claim 15 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the expandable bladder is inflated without unconfined fluid introduced to the joint.

Claim 16 (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising introducing instruments between said adjacent vertebrae to perform an operation.

Claim 17 (Currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein ~~positioning the expandable bladder comprises~~ the introducing includes manipulating a rigid shaft having the bladder at an end thereof.

Claim 18 (Currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein ~~positioning the expandable bladder comprises~~ introducing includes manipulating a flexible shaft having the bladder at an end thereof.

Claim 19 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the expandable bladder comprises a polymeric material.

Claim 20 (Currently amended): A ~~method for working on a spine, said~~ method, comprising:

positioning a cannula to access ~~the~~ a spine;

providing an apparatus having a distal portion and an expandable bladder coupled to the distal portion, the expandable bladder having surfaces configured to ~~engage and~~ spread apart adjacent vertebrae ~~apart~~ of the spine;

introducing the ~~expandable bladder~~ apparatus through the cannula to access a space between the adjacent vertebrae;

positioning the expandable bladder between the adjacent vertebrae;

inflating the expandable bladder to spread the adjacent vertebrae apart; and

operating on the spine using an instrument introduced between the expanded vertebrae.

Claim 21 (Currently amended): The method of claim 20, ~~further comprising~~ wherein the operating ~~on the spine between the adjacent vertebrae~~ is performed while said expandable bladder is inflated.

Claim 22 (Currently amended): The method of claim 21, wherein the operating ~~on the spine comprises~~ includes removing tissue from between the vertebrae.

Claim 23 (Currently amended): The method of claim 22, wherein the tissue ~~removed comprises the~~ includes at least a portion of an intervertebral disc.

Claim 24 (Canceled).

Claim 25 (Previously presented): The method of claim 20, further comprising deflating said expandable bladder and removing the expandable bladder from the spine.

Claim 26 (Previously presented): The method of claim 20, wherein the expandable bladder is disposed at the distalmost end of the apparatus.

Claim 27 (Currently amended): A method, ~~for working on a spine, said method~~ comprising:

positioning a cannula to access ~~the~~ a spine;

providing an apparatus having an expandable bladder, the expandable bladder having surfaces configured to engage and spread apart adjacent vertebrae ~~apart~~ of the spine;

introducing at least a portion of the apparatus that includes the expandable bladder through the cannula to access the adjacent vertebrae;

positioning the ~~apparatus~~ expandable bladder between the adjacent vertebrae; and

inflating the expandable bladder to spread the adjacent vertebrae apart.

Claim 28 (Currently amended): The method of claim 27, wherein the expandable bladder ~~comprises~~ includes a stretchable material so that ~~it~~ the expandable bladder at least partially collapses when deflated.

Claim 29 (Currently amended): The method of claim 27, wherein the expandable bladder ~~comprises~~ includes a material ~~which~~ that does not substantially stretch.

Claim 30 (Previously presented): The method of claim 27, wherein inflating the expandable bladder pushes soft tissue out of the way.

Claim 31 (Currently amended): The method of claim 27, further comprising introducing at least one instrument between the adjacent vertebrae and operating between the adjacent vertebrae with ~~said~~ the at least one instrument.

Claim 32 (Previously presented): The method of claim 31, further comprising operating between the adjacent vertebrae while said expandable bladder is inflated.

Claim 33 (Currently amended): The method of claim 31, wherein the operating ~~between the vertebrae comprises~~ includes removing tissue from between the vertebrae.

Claim 34 (Currently amended): The method of claim 33, wherein the tissue ~~removed comprises~~ includes at least a portion of the intervertebral disc.

Claim 35 (Previously presented): The method of claim 33, wherein the expandable bladder remains inflated while the instrument is introduced to perform the operation.

Claim 36 (Previously presented): The method of claim 33, wherein the expandable bladder is removed prior to or while the instrument is introduced to perform the operation.

Claim 37 (Previously presented): The method of claim 31, further comprising contracting the expandable bladder; and removing the apparatus from the spine.

Claims 38-58 (Canceled).

Claim 59 (Currently amended): A method, ~~for enlarging a space between adjacent surfaces in a joint, said method~~ comprising:

positioning a cannula to access ~~the~~ a joint;

introducing an expandable bladder into the joint through the cannula, the expandable bladder having surfaces configured to ~~engage and~~ spread apart adjacent surfaces ~~apart~~ in the joint when the expandable bladder is inflated;

inflating the expandable bladder ~~such that the bladder engages~~ to spread the adjacent surfaces apart and ~~distends~~ distend the joint to enlarge ~~the~~ a space between the adjacent surfaces in the joint; and

removing the expandable bladder from the joint.

Claim 60 (Currently amended): The method of claim 59, wherein the bladder is inflated without unconfined fluid present in the joint.

Claim 61 (Original): The method of claim 59, further comprising visualizing the space with a fiberoptic light and camera.

Claim 62 (Currently amended): The method of claim 61, ~~wherein~~ further comprising introducing a fiberoptic scope ~~is introduced~~ through the cannula.

Claim 63 (Original): The method of claim 61, further comprising introducing instruments to the space to perform an operation.

Claim 64 (Currently amendedl): The method of claim 59, wherein the introducing ~~the bladder comprises~~ includes manipulating a rigid shaft having the bladder at an end thereof.

Claim 65 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein introducing the bladder comprises manipulating a flexible shaft having the bladder at an end thereof.

Claim 66 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein the bladder comprises a polymeric material.

Claim 67 (Currently amended): The method of claim 59, wherein the bladder ~~comprises~~ includes an elastic material so that ~~it~~ the bladder at least partially collapses when deflated.

Claim 68 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein the bladder comprises a substantially inelastic material.

Claim 69 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein the bladder remains inflated while the instruments are introduced to perform the operation.

Claim 70 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein the bladder is removed prior to or while the instruments are introduced to perform the operation.

Claim 71 (Original): The method of claim 70, further comprising applying a vacuum to deflate the bladder prior to withdrawing the bladder.

Claim 72 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein inflating the bladder moves soft tissue out of the way.

Claim 73 (Currently amended): The method of claim 59, wherein the joint is between two vertebrae in a spine~~, wherein inflation of the bladder spreads the two vertebrae apart~~.

Claim 74 (Original): The method of claim 73, further comprising removing a spinal disc between the vertebrae.

Claim 75 (Original): The method of claim 59, wherein the joint is in a knee.

Claim 76 (Original): The method of claim 75, wherein the bladder has a wedge-shape when inflated to separate surfaces of a femur and a tibia.

Claim 77 (Previously presented): The method of claim 76, wherein at least one wedge-shaped bladder is inflated between the femur and the tibia.

Claims 78-101 (Canceled).

Claim 102 (New): The method of claim 1, wherein the apparatus further comprises an open proximal end and an open distal end defining an inflation lumen therethrough, and the expandable bladder is in fluid communication with the inflation lumen.

Claim 103 (New): The method of claim 27, wherein the apparatus further comprises an open proximal end and an open distal end defining an inflation lumen therethrough, and the expandable bladder is in fluid communication with the inflation lumen.

Claim 104 (New): The method of claim 59, wherein the expandable bladder is fluidly coupled to an open distal end of an apparatus, the apparatus configured for accessing the joint through the cannula.